

Message Text

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43

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QUOTE

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINS, IN

SUBJ: EASTERN INDIA: THE PERMIT SYSTEM

SUMMARY: LEADING EAST INDIAN POLITICIANS PUBLICLY QUESTIONED
GOI PERMIT SYSTEM IN MUCH OF AREA DURING WEEKEND TOURISM
CONVENTION. SURPRISINGLY AGGRESSIVE CRITICISM OF RESTRICTIONS
ON BOTH INDIAN AND FOREIGN TOURISTS' MOVEMENTS IN NORTH-
EASTERN INDIA CAME TO FORE WITH CHIEF MINISTER S. S. RAY (WEST
BENGAL) AND W. A. SANGMA (MAGHALAYA) TAKING LEADING ROLES.
FEELING HERE (WHICH PERHAPS CONTAINS LARGE ELEMENT WISHFUL
THINKING) THAT MODIFICATION OF GOI POLICY DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.
END SUMMARY.

2. MARCH 10-11 EASTERN INDIA TOURISM CONVENTION WHICH HELD
CALCUTTA (" GATEWAY TO EASTERN INDIA") INTERESTING ON NUMBER
OF COUNTS-- ONE OF WHICH NOTEABLY ENTHUSIASTIC AND COOPERATIVE
PARTICIPATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL EASTERN STATES AND
UNION TERRITORIES. PROBLEMS RELATED TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
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(LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE, PARTICULARLY TRANSPORTATION AND ACCOMMODATION) WERE RECOGNIZED AND BOTH CENTER (IN FORM OF UNION TOURISM MINISTER DR. KARAN SINGH) AND STATES (AS REPRESENTED BY SEVERAL CHIEF AND OTHER MINISTERS) PLEDGED RENEWED EFFORTS IMPROVE FACILITIES FOR BOTH INDIAN AND FOREIGN TRAVELLERS.

3. MOST INTERESTING QUESTION WHICH ADDRESSED DIRECTLY AND CRITICALLY BY SEVERAL LEADING POLITICAL LIGHTS IS THAT OF CONTINUATION OF RESTRICTED AREA AND INNERLINE PERMIT SYSTEM FOR TRAVEL TO MUCH OF NORTHEASTERN INDIA. UNIFORM VIEW EXPRESSED BY CHIEF MINISTERS OF WEST BENGAL, MEGHALAYA AND TRIPURA AND TOURISM MINISTERS OF ALL STATES WAS THAT RESTRICTIONS ON INDIAN TOURISTS (WHICH IN FORCE FOR ALL OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH AND MAJOR PARTS OF NAGALAND AND MIZORAM) SHOULD BE REMOVED IMMEDIATELY AND THAT RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGNERS SHOULD BE MODIFIED RADICALLY, MEGHALAYA CHIEF MINISTER SANGMA CAUSTICALLY POINTED OUT THAT RESTRICTED AREA CONCEPT FOR HIS STATE BASED ON ASSUMPTION OF HOSTILE EAST PAKISTAN. NOW THAT BANGLADESH LIBERATED, THIS OBVIOUSLY NO LONGER PERTAINS. MAGHALAYA' S TOURISM MINISTER NICHOLS-ROY (WHO HIMSELF KHASI- AMERICAN) MADE MOST SPECIFIC PLEA FOR OPENING UP EASTERN INDIA TO FOREIGNERS EXCEPT IN THOSE AREAS WHERE " NATIONAL SECURITY OR LOCAL DISTURBANCES CLEARLY DICTATE A RESTRICTIVE POLICY." HE SUGGESTED THAT ALL OF WEST BENGAL (IN WHICH DARJEELING, KALIMPONG AND KURSEONG SUBDIVISIONS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT ARE NOW RESTRICTED AREAS), ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA (ENTIRE AREAS OF WHICH ARE NOW RESTRICTED), THE VALLEYS OF TRIPURA AND MANIPUR (WHICH ARE 'NOW STABLE') AND EVEN PARTS OF NAGALAND AND MIZORAM SHOULD BE OPENED TO FOREIGN TRAVEL.

4. KARAN SINGH REPLIED TO REQUEST THAT AS FAR AS HIS MINISTRY CONCERNED, IT BACKED EASTERN STATES' DEMANDS RE LIBERALIZATION. HOWEVER, HE SAID, TOURISM MINISTRY IN PAST COULD NOT CONVINCE EITHER HOME OR DEFENSE MINISTRY GO ALONG WITH RELAXATION. SINGH SAID HE HAD 'RECENTLY ' TAKEN MATTER UP ' AT HIGHEST LEVELS, IN RIGHT EARNEST.'

5. PUBLIC COMMENT AT THIS TIME BY IMPORTANT CONGRESS (AND IN CASE OF MEGHALAYA, NON- CONGRESS) REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ON THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT OF INTEREST. NEW DELHI HINDUSTHAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIMES CARRIED STORY ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO THAT SOME PARTS OF

NOW RESTRICTED EASTERN INDIA WOULD SOON BE 'OPENED UP' TO FOREIGN TOURISTS. GOWB DEPUTY MINISTER FOR TOURISM G. GURUNG LAST WEEK TOLD US GOI HAD GIVEN GREEN LIGHT TO TOURIST GROUPS (NOT INDIVIDUALS) WITH INDIAN GUIDES FOR UNRESTRICTED TRAVEL TO DARJEELING AND KALIMPONG (WEST BENGAL), GAUHATI (ASSAM), AND SHILLONG (MAGHALAYA). MARCH 11 HE TOLD US GOI HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS RE THIS LIBERALIZATION AND FOR THAT REASON WEST BENGAL AND MEGHALAYA CHIEF MINISTERS DECIDED MAKE PUBLIC DEMAND FOR CHANGE.

6. COMMENT: THIS ISSUE WORTH WATCHING BECAUSE, ASIDE FROM QUESTION AT HAND-- TOURISM DEVELOPMENT-- WHICH IS ONE IN WHICH EASTERN STATES HAVE REAL CONCERNS AND INTEREST-- THERE IS BROADER ISSUE OF GOI'S JUDGMENT ABOUT FOREIGNERS IN INDIA. SPECIFICALLY, IN CASE OF EASTERN INDIA, DOES GOI BELIEVE (IN LINE WITH REGULAR PUBLIC ACCUSATIONS) THAT FOREIGNERS DO OR ARE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES AMONGST TRIBAL GROUPS OF AREA. FEELING HERE NOW IS THAT IF THE GOI DOES NOT HAVE SERIOUS CONCERN AND CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF PAST SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGNERS, THERE IS ENOUGH UNITED PRESSURE TO CAUSE RELAXATION OF EXISTING REGULATIONS.

DECONTROL MARCH 12, 1975.
JONES UNQUOTE
GORDON

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